

For Immediate Release

Contact: Erica Daughtrey

May 13, 2010

201-222-2828

*Washington, D.C.*-- Today, Congressman Sires joined concerned colleagues in the House of Representatives in sending a letter to Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Tiahrt of the Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services and Education. This letter stresses the importance of sufficient Pell Grant funding and urges the Chairman and Ranking Member to eliminate the Pell Grant funding gap.

“Due to the economic downturn, more and more students are applying for Pell grant programs,” said Congressman Sires. “Pell Grant applications have risen nearly 20 percent and are instrumental in providing opportunities to those who are most in need of financial assistance.”

The Federal Pell Grant Program promotes access to higher education by providing need-based grants. While recent legislation provided significant investment to increase Pell Grants, an accumulated funding gap of \$5.5 billion remains. Without additional funds, important programs in the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill may be cut, and the maximum award for Pell Grants could be reduced. In 2009, Congress guaranteed a maximum award level of \$5,550 for Fiscal Year 2010 Pell grants. If the entire funding gap of \$5.5 billion were to be taken from Pell Grant program funding, the maximum award per student would be slashed nearly in half.

“In our challenging economy, it is more vital than ever to give our children the opportunity to achieve a higher education,” said Sires. “Approximately 8.7 million students will be relying on Pell Grants during this next year and we must do everything we can to make sure that funds are available to provide the awards promised.”

###